



# BOARD OF EDUCATION NORMS AND PROTOCOLS

## Chain of Command

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Refer constituents and staff members to the proper chain of command when issues are presented to board members
  1. Teacher
  2. Principal
  3. Superintendent
  4. Board of Education

## Governance Roles and Responsibilities

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Be fiscally accountable, managing and aligning finances to meet the needs of implementation of the system strategic plan.
- Be ethically accountable, following the Code of Ethics for state Boards of Education, as defined by Georgia law.
- Act only as a body. Individual board members do not have authority. Only the board as a whole has authority. Board members will not take unilateral action. The board chair will communicate the position(s) of the board as needed. The board and the superintendent will support decisions made.
- Act as a policy making body, separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent.
- Recognize that the superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school system and refrain from attempting to micromanage or get involved with job duties for which he/she is responsible.

## Board Meetings

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Contact the board chairperson at least one week prior to the week of the board meeting for potential agenda items. The board chairperson will meet with the superintendent to develop the agenda. The agenda is sent out to board members

at least 3 days prior to the meeting. Questions will be submitted to the superintendent prior to the meeting.

- Come to the meeting prepared by reviewing the agenda in Simbli.
- Abide by Robert's Rules of Order to avoid words and actions that create a negative impression on an individual, the board, or the district. The board will be open-minded and willing to "deeply listen" to all speakers or presenters. We will agree to disagree and will do so using common courtesy and respect for others. We will not react to impromptu complaints/concerns on the spot but will assure any individual(s) that the school district will follow-up.
- Recognize the expectation that information discussed in executive session should not be discussed with fellow members outside of executive session or with non-board members.

## **Communication Among Board and Superintendent**

### ***The Board Agrees To:***

- Prepare the superintendent and other board members regarding information that may be presented for discussion at a board meeting. There should be no surprises.
- The superintendent, or designee will communicate, via phone call to board members, any issues that could potentially cause disruption to the school environment or community.
- Communicate in a respectful and timely manner.
- Recognize the time constraints of the superintendent by not inundating him/her with daily phone calls. Phone calls to the superintendent will be limited to issues that could potentially cause disruption to the community or school environment.
- Refrain from contacting the superintendent outside of business hours unless it is an urgent situation. Board members will call and send non-urgent emails and texts during business hours (Monday through Friday; 7:30 am through 6:00 pm)
- Direct questions to the board chair during times of crisis when the school system is making decisions regarding how to respond. During this time, the board chair will act as liaison for communication between the superintendent and the board. The board chair and superintendent will maintain frequent contact, as appropriate, during this time. The board chair will then share updates with the entire board.

- Maintain confidentiality regarding conversations among board members and/or superintendent, unless otherwise noted by the superintendent. Board members are encouraged to engage in phone calls privately and to protect conversations from being overheard.

## Communication With Staff and Stakeholders

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- The practice that the superintendent is the only employee who reports directly to the Board of Education members, unless otherwise directed by the superintendent.
- The practice that the Board of Education members will make arrangements through the superintendent when wanting to communicate directly with staff members.
- Be a cohesive team and show support to system staff members
- Speak privately with the superintendent regarding a concern related to a staff member or a school issue, unless the superintendent directs them to share the concern.
- Be respectful and courteous to system staff members
- Refrain from surprising staff members with issues/concerns during staff presentations at board meetings
- Refer issues, inquiries, and/or concerns to the superintendent when notified by community members
- During board meetings, members will demonstrate engagement through active listening, participation, and setting aside cell phones to maintain focus on the discussion.

## Strategic Planning

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals towards that vision.
- Ensure the goals of the strategic plan remain the district's top priorities.
- Annually commit to support the action plans outlined in the district's strategic plan.
- Cultivate an environment for continuous improvement.

## School Visits

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Notify the superintendent before visiting a school within the district when wishing to visit. Visits to a school must be in accordance with the role of a board member.
- Leave gifts at the front office when wishing to take gifts to all employees of a school.
- Adhere to a protocol that does not preclude board members from attending school functions as a parent or as a community member.

## Social Media

### *The Board Agrees To:*

- Use social media as a tool to promote positive and important news concerning the school district.
- Refrain from engaging or responding to the public on controversial topics or negative comments on social media.
- Refrain from responding during a crisis and rely on the district social media sites to relay critical information.
- Send any social media information of concerns or controversy to the superintendent and board chair.
- Recognize that their spouses and direct family members may be inadvertently viewed as representing them on social media as an individual board member. Thus, board members are strongly encouraged to discuss with their family members how social media responses on behalf of the board or in defense of the board would negatively impact the entire board.

## Addressing Concerns Regarding Board Norms and Protocols Among Board Members

The governance team agrees to:

- Remain focused on the academic success of Vidalia City Schools students and in turn, remain committed to following the Board Norms and Protocols as closely as possible.
- Recognize that honest and open communication regarding best governance practices is paramount to successful governance and positive working relationships.
- Attempt to resolve any perceived deviation from Board Norms and Protocols in the following manner:
  1. Board member with a concern about another Board member will express the concern to the Board member privately and seek to resolve the concern.
  2. If the concern is unresolved, the Board member with the concern about another Board member will discuss the concern with the Board Chair and/or Superintendent privately.
  3. The Board Chair will meet with the Board member of concern and remind them of their Code of Ethics, best Board governance practices, the team commitment to following the Norms and Protocols as well as any potential impact a deviation from best practices could have on the school system.
  4. If the aforementioned actions, in the view of the Chair, do not bring resolution, then the Board Chair and one other Board member shall meet with the noted Board member, remind them of their Code of Ethics to follow governing policies and protocols, and seek to garner a commitment to display appropriate action.
  5. If the Board Chair is the member of noted concern, the Vice Chair and/or Superintendent will hear the concern from any Board member. The Vice Chair will meet with the Chair and include the Superintendent or another Board member.

If the above steps are unsuccessful, then Policy BH's provision, "Upon a motion supported by a two-thirds vote, the board may choose to conduct a hearing concerning a possible violation of this Code of Ethics by a member of the Board."